



Reconnecting Residents and Neighborhoods

# Newsletter

January 2024

## Durham Choice Turns One!

Durham Choice celebrated its first anniversary in the fall of 2023! Durham Choice is a partnership of the Durham Housing Authority (DHA) and the City of Durham, supported by \$40 million Choice Neighborhoods Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The program has three core goals:

- ✓ Redevelop two aging public housing developments in downtown Durham, 519 E. Main and Liberty Street Apartments, into vibrant mixed-income communities.
- ✓ Provide DHA residents with comprehensive health services, as well as educational and employment training opportunities, to assist them in pursuing their personal goals.
- ✓ Invest in the surrounding neighborhood, with a focus on the historic African American community of Hayti, by supporting community institutions, building connections among residents and supporting small and minority-owned businesses.

The first year has been busy! We've started work in all three areas of the Durham Choice program: affordable housing, resident services and neighborhood investments. We also launched our new website, [www.DurhamChoice.org](http://www.DurhamChoice.org), where you can find the latest news about the program.

### Affordable Housing

Led by developer partner, Laurel Street Residential, construction of the first phase of replacement housing has begun. Phase 1 includes 72 affordable apartment homes for individuals and families and is expected to be completed in early 2025. In addition, demolition of existing housing has begun to make way for the second phase of housing development, which will include 172 mixed-income apartment homes for seniors and families. The second phase is expected to be completed by the end of 2025.

Two additional housing phases are planned. The completed project will include 555 apartment homes - 331 affordable and 224 market-rate - as well as a community center, a one-acre park and commercial space located along Main Street. The development is being financed with a combination of Low-Income Housing Tax credits, Choice Neighborhoods grant funding, private mortgage debt and a \$15 million investment from the City of Durham's *Forever Home, Durham* program.

*Right: Construction on Phase 1 housing site at the intersection of Liberty and Elizabeth Streets; demolition of existing housing on Phase 2 site.*



## Resident Services

Durham Choice selected Urban Strategies, Inc., a national nonprofit with over 40 years' experience in community development, to serve as the coordinator of resident services (aka the "People Partner"). Urban Strategy's local team will work with adults and children to connect them to education, employment and health care services. The team includes a clinical health worker provided by Duke University who will assist residents with their health needs, whether that involves scheduling appointments, checking on medications or providing one-on-one health education.

In August 2023, Durham Choice held its first summer camp. Campers spent two weeks exploring their lives and journeys through art. The camp culminated with an art show at the Hayti Heritage Center.



*Young artists in front of a display of their work at the Hayti Heritage Center.*

## Neighborhood Investments

The Durham Choice team was excited to receive approval from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in December 2023 to invest \$6 million in grant funds in the neighborhood surrounding the 519 E. Main and Liberty Street housing sites. A key focus of the Durham Choice Neighborhood Plan is on the historic Hayti neighborhood, a once-thriving African American community devastated by the construction of the Durham Freeway which severed Hayti from downtown Durham. Planned neighborhood investments include:



*Hayti Heritage Center; public art installation on Ramseur Street; example of crosswalk art to improve pedestrian safety.*

- Restoration of the façade of the Hayti Heritage Center, a community anchor and cultural facility dedicated to preserving the heritage and celebrating the experiences of Americans of African descent.
- Construction of a pedestrian trail to reconnect Hayti physically to downtown, as well as to educate Durham residents and visitors alike about the history and importance of the Hayti community through historic markers and public art.
- Creation of a Business Retention and Recruitment Fund to support legacy businesses in Hayti and downtown Durham and nurture new small and minority-owned ventures in existing and new commercial spaces.
- Construction of a one-acre park at the heart of the redeveloped housing site as well as pedestrian improvements around the site.

The implementation of the Neighborhood Plan is being led by Downtown Durham, Inc. , a trusted community partner with 30 years of experience in fostering economic growth and vibrancy in downtown Durham.

**For the latest news about Durham Choice, visit**

**[www.DurhamChoice.org](http://www.DurhamChoice.org).**

# Resident News

## Relocation Update

Because the redevelopment of 519 E. Main and Liberty Street Apartments will require that all existing buildings be demolished, residents are being relocated during the construction process. To date, most residents of Liberty Street have moved to their new homes.

Residents of 519 E. Main are beginning the relocation process. DHA's relocation contractor, Housing to Home, will be reaching out to residents at 519 E. Main to discuss temporary housing options, which might include a similar unit in another DHA-owned property or a voucher to rent apartment owned by a private landlord. Once residents have accepted a temporary housing option, Housing to Home will assist with the move by providing packing materials and scheduling movers to transport belongings to the new home. Moving costs are paid for by DHA.

**Residents temporarily relocated as part of the 519 E. Main/Liberty Street redevelopment have the right to return to the site when new units become available.** No additional screening will be required and rent will continue to be based on 30% of household income. Residents must remain compliant with their leases while living in DHA properties to be eligible to return.

### Tips for Coping with Move-Related Stress

Moving can be pretty stressful. Here are a few tips to cope with a move:

- **Remember that stress is a normal part of moving:** Change is hard for everyone, and accepting stress can help you manage the move.
- **Plan and stay organized:** Give yourself plenty of time to plan your move. Labeling, sorting, and packing your belongings takes longer than you think. You might dread the process and want to procrastinate, but the earlier you start, the less rushed and frantic you'll be on moving day.
- **Ask for help from friends and family:** Even if they don't *physically* help during the move, they can provide emotional support.
- **Hire professional movers:** This can reduce the work and stress related to packing, lifting, and transporting.

*Excerpted from Katharine Chan, **What Are the 5 Top Stressors in Life?**, 2023.*

## Resident Spotlight: Roosevelt Williams



*Roosevelt Williams, at home at The Joyce*

Roosevelt Williams, a former resident of the Durham Housing Authority 519 E. Main Street community, recently relocated to the brand-new senior apartment building, The Joyce, located at 487 Morehead Street. DHA and its development partners Laurel Street Residential and CCI/ Florian constructed the 82-unit affordable property and renovated the adjacent J.J. Henderson Apartments as part of the implementation of DHA's Downtown Durham Neighborhood Plan (DDNP). DDNP envisions that the revitalization of DHA's 519 E. Main and Liberty Street Apartments, along with the development of multiple other DHA, City, and County-owned properties in the downtown/central city area, will serve as a catalyst for a more equitable transformation of the neighborhood.

After moving into his new apartment in October, Mr. Williams couldn't be happier with his new living situation. When asked about his experience, he enthusiastically replied, "I love it here." One of the things that Mr. Williams appreciates most about The Joyce is the quiet environment it provides. He enjoys the peacefulness of the building, which allows him to relax and unwind after a long day. He is also grateful for the additional security features that help him feel safe and protected in his new home. In all, Mr. Williams has no doubt that he made the right decision in relocating to The Joyce. He believes that it is a fantastic place to live and is grateful for the positive changes that Durham Choice is bringing to Durham.

## Durham Choice Partners



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